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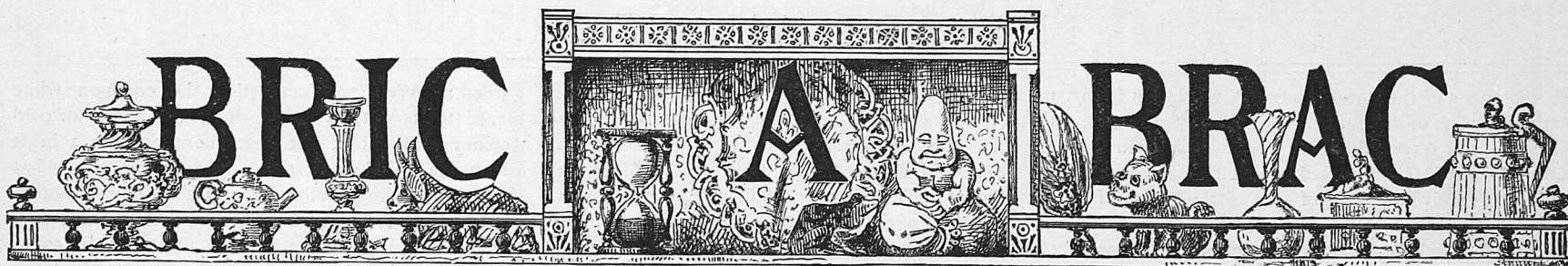
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CLOISONNÉ ENAMELS.



JUST as the French to-day, in reviving translucent enamel painting, may be said to have equalled if not surpassed the masters of the Renaissance, so in some of their recent essays in the manufacture of opaque enamels they have improved upon the methods which for ages have given pre-eminence to the nations of the far East in this direction. How thoroughly they have made these arts their own is indicated by the fact that "cloisonné" and "champlevé"—the two kinds of embedded enamels—are known nearly all over the world by their French names. The first of these—to the consideration of which we must confine ourselves for the present—it is hardly necessary to repeat, is so named from the pattern being formed by wires or bands of metal dividing the various colored enamels, and leaving each of them in a separate compartment. The wires, or rather narrow ribbons, are soldered to a brass plate. In the French cloisonné, as we shall see presently, the compartments are not formed by soldering, but by casting and graving on the block.

It is supposed that the invention of cloisonné was borrowed from nature. If you cut a pomegranate transversely, or, better still, the fruit of the white nenuphar, you have the general effect of cloisonné enamels made by the sap and the sun; and perhaps it is not unreasonable to believe that some one, passionately fond of nature, should from this suggestion have modelled the familiar artificial arrangement of cells upon a groundwork of copper or other metal, filling them with enamel with something of the appearance of the seeds in the pomegranate. The thought of changing the coloring would naturally present itself to the mind. In the opinion of some writers, cloisonné enamel was made to imitate the effects produced by mounting precious stones in metal. This is the view taken by Mr. Frédéric Vors in his "Bibelots and Curios," from which handy little volume we extract the following lucid description of the process of manufacture:

"Thin metallic divisions, formed of wire of a rectangular section, are mounted on edge on the space to be enamelled, circumscribing the colors or following the lines of the ornamental design to be applied. The threads of metal are held in position with a strong gum or mucilage until each little cell formed by them is filled or 'charged' with enamel. The enamel, which is simply colored glass reduced to an impalpable powder, and prepared so that it will melt or fuse—that is, turn again into glass—at a proper temperature, is introduced into each cavity, mixed with a little gum and water, to hold it in place until the piece is fired. When all the cells are filled with the different colored enamels which compose the design, the piece is fired in an enameller's muffle, which is a small open furnace giving intense heat. In the centre of the fireplace is the

muffle proper, which is a semi-cylindrical tube of refractory clay suitable to the size of the piece to be fired. The workman watches the piece with great attention and withdraws it from the fire as soon as he sees the surface of the powdered glass become glassy. The piece is left to cool gradually, to prevent the enamel from falling or scaling off. It will be easily understood that the cells, which were full of powdered enamel

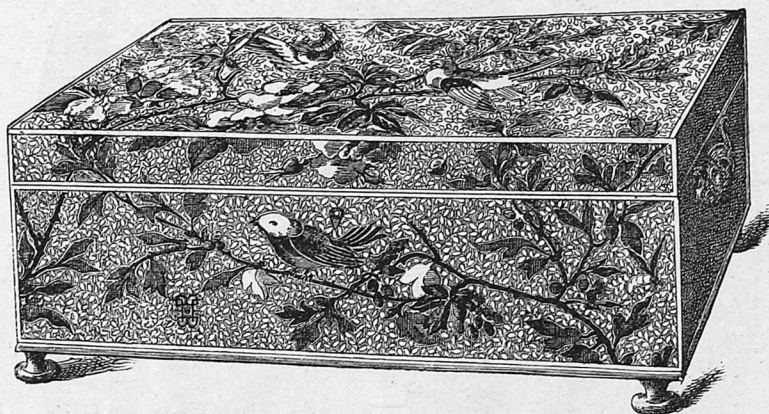
pose of preventing the enamels running into each other, and when polished they serve as a graceful trelliswork for the design.

The Byzantine "cloisonnés," the most ancient of which are hardly more than 1200 years old, mostly represent the human figure and show various barbarous designs. The Chinese, with better judgment, have very rarely done so, and the Japanese, who borrowed the art from them, with their characteristic good taste followed their example in this respect. These wise Orientals understand that there are better pigments for painting the human face than enamel melted in cells, and better tools for applying them than pieces of copper and spoon-bills or spatulas. These limitations, however, do not make the cloisonné decorations of the East less attractive or wanting in variety of subject. They are notable indeed for their beauty in color and ingenuity of design; for as a rule they are as striking to the imagination as they are pleasing to the eye. Fruits, flowers, animals heraldically employed as chimeras or symbols, involved geometrical ornaments, conventionally treated landscapes—such are the subjects

employed by the Chinese and Japanese in their cloisonné decoration. Here we see the crane of longevity spreading itself upon a lapis-lazuli blue ground and about to alight in the tall grass; there the Nankeen duck, emblem of conjugal fidelity, extending its wings and revealing its charming rose-tints, upon a turquoise background; or perhaps we have branches of the pine, the bamboo, or the blossoming peach. But the great charm of these cloisonnés lies, after all, in their wonderful variety and combinations of color. Everything is so arranged as to be in perfect harmony. That the whites may not be too crude they are glazed with lilac or take soft creamy tints. The yellows have sometimes a tinge of sulphur. The opposition of greens to vermillion or to carnation is tempered by harmonizing tones of celadon. The blue is sometimes strong, sometimes streaked, or again pale and slightly clouded, giving that lovely color the Chinese call "sky-blue after the rain." Shades of saffron, cinnamon, and agate red are used to subdue colors too striking, and black is often introduced with capital effect to enhance the brilliancy of others.

Jacquemart says: "An unheard-of circumstance which shows the exceeding skilfulness of the Eastern nations in the practice of this art is that there exist enamels almost translucent, and which the artists have succeeded in fixing in their cloisons alone, without any subjectile, in fact, which might be described as without a reverse side, so that when looking at them through the light we may distinguish the richness of the tones and trace the design sharply defined by its opacity. This style

seems peculiar more especially to the Indians." A very beautiful example of what we take to be very similar in effect to the enamel Jacquemart here describes was given in our last issue, in the superb beaker of Flemish workmanship of the fifteenth century, which is one of the treasures of the South Kensington Museum. Among the Chinese is found another specialty. In the rectangular plaques, intended to serve as screens,



COFFER IN CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL. BY BARBEDIENNE.

when the piece was put into the muffle, will now contain only a drop of solidified glass, which occupies much less space than the powder did; this necessitates filling the cells again, and passing the piece through the fire a second time. This operation of refilling and refiring is repeated until the enamel is level with the top of the 'cloisons.' The surface is then ground down, both the metal lines and the melted glass being levelled



VASE IN CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL. BY CHRISTOFLE.

by the process. From this operation is derived the French term 'afléuré,' sometimes applied to enclosed enamels." It may be added, that sometimes by a final baking, by means of a layer of flux or absolutely translucent glass, a glaze is imparted to the enamel, giving it almost the brilliancy of a cut precious stone. The metal partitions are often so delicate that they seem no thicker than a hair; but they have answered the pur-

and which appear to date from an extremely remote period, are depicted birds, flowers, and especially landscapes representing the seasons, in which enamels of various colors are often in close contact, the cells appearing on the grounds rather to heighten the effect than to fix and define the vitreous substance. This style is accordingly found in extremely ancient works, where the tones are few in number, and the designs very simple. It is needless to say that many specimens cannot be quoted of these objects, which are in truth excessively rare in Europe.

Little is known of the introduction or progress of the art of working in cloisonné enamel, and there seems some reason to doubt whether it originated in China, as generally supposed, although, from the great number of specimens to be found in the north of that country, it would appear to have been largely patronized during the period at which it was followed, that of the early emperors of the present dynasty, commencing A.D. 1664. The art is now apparently lost in China, but is still practised in the neighboring country of Japan. The uses to which it is applied are very numerous, tables, braziers, incense-holders, candlesticks, stools, pictures, capstands, bracelets, vases, trays; and ornaments of every description, being found in it; but the taste for it seems to have been confined to the north of China, whether from prejudice on the part of the southerners against an art introduced by their Tartar conquerors, or from the difficulty of preserving it from the ravages of verdigris and of a worm said to eat into the enamel in the south, or from its failure to harmonize with the sense of the beautiful of the more effeminate rice-eating natives of the provinces south of the Yellow River.

As the same art exists in India, it is probable that it was introduced thence among the other spoils obtained in Kien-lung's western campaigns in the middle of the eighteenth century; or it is even possible that it was carried to China from Europe, where it had long been known, by the Jesuit missionaries, who, strange to say, are silent on the subject in the copious and interesting memoirs they have written on the arts and sciences of China.

Old European cloisonné enamels are extremely rare; not only the smallness of their size, but the value of the gold groundwork on which they were laid, led to their destruction. Very probably, also, there were but few artists at any time who had the skill to make them. At Paris, in the public library, are portions of the dress and arms of Childeric, who was buried late in the fifth century. These relics were found in his tomb, when opened in 1653, and are ornamented with a kind of coarse setting forming a honeycomb work, the interstices of which are filled with (some say) translucent colored enamels. In the same collection is the cover of a manuscript, probably of the seventh century, with four little cloisonné enamels of flowers, one at each corner; the colors are opaque, white, light blue, and semi-transparent green. Barbaric as some of the uses of many of the relics of remote antiquity may appear, we find that no object is too mean to be made agreeable to the eye. The same impulse which induced the old Celt or Frank to adorn himself with torques and brooches led him to decorate those objects with such fanciful ornaments as he could conceive, or his rude tools permitted him to execute. An absolute freedom of individual design unquestionably prevailed. Hence out of the numberless examples of enamelled jewelry which have been found in the graves of buried chiefs, though all have a certain similarity in form, scarcely any two are identical in ornamentation. However complicated may be the system of knotwork which is the ordinary feature of the enriched compartments, each artist seems to have originated something expressly for himself. It is this fertility of fancy, coupled often with rare dexterity in workmanship, which gives their principal charm to these old jewels, uninfluenced as they

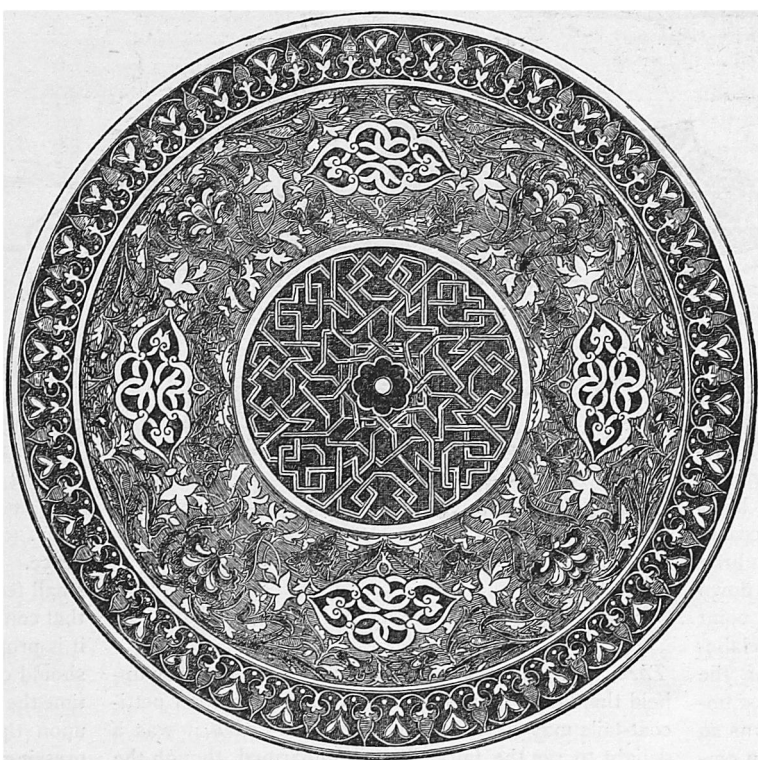
were by any directing guide of traditional style or scientific training.

Mr. Beresford Hope, of London, possesses a small pectoral cross of about the year 950, enamelled on both sides by the cloisonné process, which is, or has been, on exhibition at the South Kensington Museum; and at Vienna are the famous crown and sword of Charle-



EWER AND TRAY IN CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL. BY CHRISTOFLE.

magne. The more ancient portions of this crown and sword are of the date assigned to them, and are ornamented with figures in cloisonné enamel. The flesh tints are in rose-color; the draperies and accessories in blue, red, and white. A few more celebrated examples are the Pala d'Oro or altar front at Venice, the shrine of the three kings at Cologne, and the well-known



TRAY IN CHAMPLEVÉ ENAMEL. BY BARBEDIENNE.

jewel at Oxford, made (as some read the inscription) for King Alfred the Great of England.

The perfection of modern cloisonné enamel has been reached by the French in such beautiful examples of their work as we illustrate herewith. Without servilely following Chinese and Japanese models they catch valuable suggestions from them as to balance, distribu-

tion and propriety of design, points in decorative art in which the artisans of Cipango and Cathay are well qualified to give instruction. Barbedienne and Christofle, whose names are most prominently connected with the European revival of the art of embedded enamelling, have in some respects "bettered the instruction" of their Oriental masters. It is certainly an advance to produce the frame for the enamel in a single casting, as these Frenchmen do, instead of making it up of numerous separate pieces to form the partition, after the old fashion. By this means, moreover, unlimited reproductions may be obtained from any model, or while using the same outlines as many variations may be made in the distribution of the coloring as the fancy of the designer may suggest. In selecting examples of the work of Barbedienne and Christofle, we have included in our illustrations a beautiful specimen of champlevé enamel by the former. But this kind of enamel is so different in character from that which we have been discussing, and there is so much to say about it, that we must defer to a future number the consideration of that branch of our subject.

SOME ART TERMS DEFINED.

Æs, Latin word for copper and brass. 1. White; contains an excess of silver. 2. Red; contains an excess of gold. 3. In this kind, gold, silver, and copper are mixed in equal proportions. 4. The fourth kind, called hepatizon, had a liver-color, which gave it its value.

Airain (French), same as "Æs."

Agraffe, a French word, meaning a clasp. It particularly denotes a neck-clasp for a cloak.

Aiguière, a vessel with a neck and handle, especially designed to contain water.

Alabaster, white stone, semi-transparent, and used for decorations of inferior quality. The "onyx d'Algérie" has been termed Egyptian alabaster.

Amatorii, majolica plates of the cinque-cento period, usually bearing the likeness of some young woman to whom the plate was sent, filled with fruit or confectionery, as a love token or betrothal gift.

Amber (electron), a particular kind of rosin, found principally on the shores of the Baltic Sea; known to the ancients. It was supposed to possess many mysterious qualities. It was used in the East for the mouth-pieces of pipes, as it was believed that it prevented the transmission of disease.

Amorini, an Italian term, often found in descriptions of ceramic decoration, meaning "loves" or cupids.

Amphora, the name of a vase with two handles used by the ancient Greeks for domestic purposes, and also for coffins.

Ampoule, a small bottle used in the Roman Catholic Church to contain sacred oils.

Antique. This word denotes no particular date, but is generally applied to those monuments of ancient Greek and Roman art that have been handed down to us.

Atelier, the French name for a studio.

Argentarium, an alloy of equal parts of lead and tin (Pliny).

Aumonière, a bag to hang to the girdle, destined to carry the missal and the money for alms, often called also a mass-bag.

Aventurine, or gold stone, found in Brittany and in Spain. It is reproduced in the Venetian glass and in Japanese lacquerwork.

Badin, a ribbon used in France to suspend the fan to the belt.

Bahut, a "press" or cupboard.

Basse-lisse (low warp), a tapestry made on a loom where the warp is horizontal.

Beaker, a drinking-cup, as distinguished from a tankard. The term is generally applied to a form of Chinese or Japanese vase, cylindrical except at its mouth, where it widens like the large end of a trumpet.

[To be continued.]